

Peer Review

Review of: "A Harmless Avian Vaccine Virus Could Be Developed into an Off-the-Shelf “Antibiotic” for Viruses"

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This commentary proposes an intriguing and unconventional strategy—repurposing the attenuated avian vaccine virus infectious bursal disease virus (IBDV) strain R903/78 as a broad-spectrum, interferon-inducing “off-the-shelf” antiviral therapy based on the concept of viral interference and host-directed innate immune activation. The manuscript’s strength lies in its bold translational vision, integration of historical data on nonspecific effects of live vaccines (e.g., OPV), and mechanistic plausibility through dsRNA-mediated type I interferon induction, which is biologically consistent with broad antiviral states. The authors also appropriately highlight pandemic preparedness gaps and the theoretical advantages of stockpiled, orally administered immunostimulatory agents. However, the argument relies heavily on small, heterogeneous clinical experiences, case reports, and non-randomized studies, with limited high-quality controlled clinical data to substantiate broad efficacy claims across multiple unrelated viral infections. Assertions regarding safety, large-scale effectiveness, and potential mitigation of “many millions of deaths” are speculative and exceed the level of evidence currently presented. The mechanistic rationale is plausible, but risks of systemic interferon activation, immune dysregulation, and regulatory hurdles are underexplored, and the commentary does not sufficiently address dose standardization, replication competence concerns, or rigorous phase-controlled trial pathways. Overall, the article presents a provocative and potentially valuable hypothesis in host-directed antiviral therapy, but its clinical and public health implications should be framed more cautiously pending robust randomized controlled trials and independent validation.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.